

SITUATION REPORT NO. 3

INCIDENT NO. 2002-040

DATE: May 31, 2002 TIME: 12:00 p.m.

TO: Governor John Hoeven
State Capitol
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Spring Fires Statewide - Dry conditions in areas of high fuel content have contributed to an increased fire potential this spring. State fire management experts note that the average fire size this year is approximately 10 times larger than the 10-year average.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: On May 26, a man was killed in a grass fire south of Bismarck that burned approximately 50 to 100 acres. He was attempting to create a break between the fire and a nearby housing development when the tractor he was driving got stuck in a slough.

As indicated in the first report, a Kidder County man was killed and his brother was injured while tending a stubble field fire. The second report indicated a man suffered smoke inhalation when a silo and milking parlor caught fire on a farm between Surrey and Minot in Ward County. He was treated and released from a local hospital.

3. DAMAGES: Due to northwest winds combined with low humidity, high temperatures, and very dry rangeland conditions, the National Weather Service (NWS) issued a red flag warning on May 30 for western and central North Dakota and eastern North Dakota in the afternoon.

The N.D. Rangeland Fire Danger Index is in the extreme and very high categories for May 31, prompting the NWS to issue a Fire Weather Watch. After this morning's thundershowers, temperatures are expected to rise to the mid to upper 80s across the state with increasing afternoon winds of 25 to 30 miles per hour (mph). The following north central and eastern counties in the extreme categories are: Burke, Mountrail, Renville, Ward, Bottineau, McHenry, Rolette, Pierce, Towner, Cavalier, Pembina, Benson, Ramsey, Walsh, Wells, Eddy, Foster, Nelson, Grand Forks, Griggs, Steel, Traill, Cass, Ransom, Sargent and Richland. The remainder of the state is in the very high category. Information regarding fire weather forecasts can be found at:
<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/bis/fire.htm>.

The NWS reported that the outlook for June 1 indicates cooler air, lighter northerly winds and more clouds will spread over the state. As a result, the Fire Danger Index will likely be in the high category.

Fire Reports:

On May 26, a fire burned between 50 and 100 acres near a housing development just south of Bismarck.

On May 28, a 50-acre grassland fire occurred just approximately 11 miles south of Mandan.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: Responders include fire departments, dispatch centers, ambulance services, law enforcement, emergency management and the Kidder County Coroner's Office.

STATE: Agencies monitoring fire conditions and reports include the Governor's Office, the N.D. Forest Service, State Radio Communications, the State Fire Marshal's Office, the N.D. State Game and Fish Department, the North Dakota Highway Patrol, the N.D. State Parks and Recreation Department, the North Dakota National Guard, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the N.D. Division of Emergency Management.

FEDERAL: Agencies providing assistance include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the National Weather Service and the Bureau of Forestry/Fire Council, a division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

5. VOLUNTEER ACTIONS: Neighbors assisted local fire departments by providing equipment for the construction of firebreaks.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: On May 30, Governor John Hoeven proclaimed a statewide fire danger emergency. The proclamation was issued in response to a combination of extreme weather and dry conditions, which significantly increases the risk of fires. The governor also signed an executive order authorizing the N.D. Division of Emergency Management to implement all necessary operational procedures on the fire danger statements from the NWS to all lands, both public and private. Outdoor fire activity is restricted when the Fire Danger Index reaches the very high category. When the index is in the extreme category open burning is prohibited and off-road travel is restricted. These precautions are outlined in the North Dakota Rural Fire Danger Guide available on the web at:
www.state.nd.us/dem/FireDanger/fire.pdf.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No assistance is needed at this time.

8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from the previous report.

9. OTHER: Appropriate state, local and private entity emergency operations plans and procedures have been implemented.

The N.D. Rural Fire Mitigation Guide is posted on the N.D. Division of Emergency Management web site: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>.

Situation Reports published by North Dakota Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director